



U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, Chairman

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions

For Immediate Release
Monday, September 22, 2003

Contact: Erin Rath/Joshua Shields
(202) 224-6770

GREGG, HELP COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE LOW ACHIEVEMENT IN HISTORY AND CIVICS

*Research shows students are ignorant of U.S. History
Censored textbooks and weak standards may be to blame*

Washington, DC – Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH) and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions will hold a hearing this week to examine what our children are reading in school and how it is affecting their achievement. The hearing will take place on Wednesday, September 24, 2003 at 10a.m.

Many scholars have determined that school textbooks and assessments have been so sanitized that textbooks lack rich content and balanced perspectives. Efforts to ban words such as “American,” “backward,” “ladylike” and “early man” in school textbooks and assessments combined with efforts to eliminate references to Aesop’s Fables are just a few of the many examples.

Nowhere is this more clear than in an examination of history textbooks and state standards, where outside pressures have resulted in textbooks and standards that are anemic, unbalanced and occasionally inaccurate. In Texas alone, 500 factual errors were found more than two-dozen social studies textbooks used in the State.

A combination of inferior textbooks and weak standards is one of the reasons nearly half of U.S. 12th graders have virtually no knowledge or understanding of U.S. history and less than one third of college seniors could identify that the U.S. Constitution established our government’s division of power.

“Some of the textbooks our children are asked to read contain unexplainable errors and are written to the lowest common denominator. How can we ask our children to develop an interest in history and civics, let alone increase their achievement, unless they are given better tools to work with?” said Senator Gregg. “I hope we can begin a national dialogue with this hearing to examine this problem and to pinpoint ways in which we can prevent the watering down of textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels.”

Full Committee Hearing

Date: **Wednesday, September 24, 2003**

Time: **10:00 a.m.**

Place: **SD-430
Dirksen Senate Office Building**

Agenda: **What Is Your Child Reading in School?
How Standards and Textbooks Influence Education**

Witnesses: **Diane Ravitch, Ph.D.**
Research Professor, New York University
New York, NY

Gilbert Sewall
Director, American Textbook Council
New York, NY

Sandra Stotsky, Ed.D.
(Former) Senior Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Education
Malden, MA

Robert Hagopian
Teacher, Scotts Valley Middle School
Scotts Valley, CA

Additional witness to be announced

###